REMARKS

Applicants make this submission in response to the Office Action (non-final rejection) mailed June 2, 2006. Reconsideration of the application in view of the claim amendments set forth herein and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

1. Claim Amendments

Applicants have canceled claims 1, 5 and 6, without prejudice, and have amended dependent claims 2-4 and 8-9. The claim amendments have been undertaken so as to establish dependencies with respect to independent claim 16 (either directly or indirectly) and to address requisite antecedent recitations. Applicants expressly reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the canceled claims in future patent filings and/or claim amendments. Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter is introduced by way of the proposed claim amendments. Prompt entry thereof is respectfully requested. Upon entry of the proposed claim amendments, claims 2-4, 8-9, 16-17 and 19-21 are pending.

2. Response to Section 112 Rejection

Claims 1-6, 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 USC § 112, first and second paragraphs, based on the Examiner's position that the previously added recitation "in the absence of a sterilizing agent" in independent claim 1 raises an issue of new matter and is indefinite. Applicants respectfully submit that the Section 112 issues are obviated through applicants' cancellation of independent claim 1 and the revised dependencies of claims 2-4 and 8-9. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding Section 112 rejection are respectfully requested.

3. Outstanding Art Rejection

Claims 1, 2, 4-6 and 8 stand rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) based on U.S. Patent No. 5,730,934 to Holbert et al. (the "Holbert '934 patent") or U.S. Patent No. 5,843,374 to Sizer et al. (the "Sizer '374 patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,83,784 to Morgan et al. (the "Morgan '784 patent"). Applicants respectfully disagree with the outstanding art rejection for at least the reasons noted in Applicants' previous submissions, including specifically applicants' RCE filed under Certificate of Mailing dated March 7, 2006.

Nonetheless, to expedite prosecution in the present application, applicants have canceled independent claim 1 and dependent claims 5-6. The other dependent claims that are subject to the foregoing obviousness rejection have been amended to amend, directly or indirectly, from independent claim 16. As noted below, independent claim 16 has been allowed. Accordingly,

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applicants respectfully submit that the outstanding rejection under Section 103 no longer applies. Reconsideration and withdrawal of such art-based rejection are requested.

4. Allowed Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 16, 17 and 19-21 are allowed. As amended, claims 2-4 and 8-9 also depend, directly or indirectly, from independent claim 16 and are allowable for at least the reasons giving rise to allowance of independent claim 16. For at least the foregoing reasons, applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims, namely claims 16-17, 19-21, 2-4 and 8-9, are now in condition for allowance.

5. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request prompt action leading to an early Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone communication might be useful in advancing prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative of applicants.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 5, 2007

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